



JEREMIAH COUGHLAN/The Columbian

Sandy and Richard Cereghino put finishing touches on the Skyridge Mid School sign. The wall supporting the sign was built using bricks from Camas' first school, Grass Valley. Students refurbished the bricks.

## New life for old bricks

Part of the old Grass Valley School went into the new sign at Skyridge

### THE OLD AND THE NEW

#### ■ SKYRIDGE MID SCHOOL:

Opened September 1996 at 5220 N.W. Parker St. (grades 7-9)

#### ■ GRASS VALLEY SCHOOL:

Log school built in 1867 on an acre donated by Oregon Trail pioneer Henry Knapp; brick structure built in 1925; school closed after consolidation with Camas School District in 1936.

By TOM VOGT  
Columbian staff writer

CAMAS — Bricks went back to school this fall, too.

A thousand or so red clay bricks are back on campus this year, providing Skyridge Mid School with a link to the area's pioneering past.

They got a second life when last year's ninth-graders decided to place a sign on Parker Street, at the entrance to the Skyridge parking lot, as their farewell project.

The Skyridge sign was mounted on a wall made with bricks from the old Grass Valley School, built in 1925 on a school site that dated back to 1867.

The bricks had been salvaged in 1997 by area residents when the site at Northwest 38th Avenue and Parker Street was cleared to make way for development. The bricks were stored at the



FILES/The Columbian

homes of Curtis Hughey, president of the Camas-Washougal Historical Society, and former Grass Valley School student Reuben Bafus.

The students didn't only think up the project. They also did the cleanup, chipping mortar, scraping moss and brushing mud from the 77-year-old products of Vancouver's Hidden brick factory.

Grass Valley School, shown in the 1920s, was at what is now Northwest 38th Avenue and Parker Street.

"It was a lot harder than I thought," said Simone McAlonen, now a sophomore at Camas High School. "You really had to invest some work in it."

"I knew when I showed up that two hours wasn't going to be enough," said classmate Chris Guard. "One brick was

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totally encased in mortar and I had to break it out with a hammer. I was surprised that all those ancient bricks turned out so great."

"A hundred and fifty students worked on them," said Tom Wallenborn, Skyridge activities director. "Some worked on weekends."

"All those kids: You'd see them talking, but they never stopped working. They'd get dirty, and then go right back

to class," said Wallenborn, who parked his car downwind of the work site one day.

"I still have particles of red brick dust that I can't get out of my car," Wallenborn said. Kyle Barber handled more bricks than any other student. He helped his father, local mason Chuck Barber, dig them out of the salvage pile, load them on a flatbed truck and

haul them to the Skyridge campus.

"I saw all sorts of spiders I'd never seen before," the student said.

There also was a family link in the project for the Camas sophomore. His grandfather was one of several family members who attended Grass Valley School.

And now pieces of that

school, reassembled with labor donated by local contractors, are heading into another century of use at Skyridge. They had an eye on that future when the sign, which reads "Skyridge School," was designed.

"This could be an elementary school someday," Wallenborn said. "We just don't know what it might be."